

**Report of the  
Accreditation Visiting Team**

**Pleasant Grove High School  
700 East 200 South  
Pleasant Grove, Utah 84062**

**April 14-15, 2005**



Utah State Office of Education  
250 East 500 South  
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Salt Lake City, Utah 84114-4200

**THE REPORT OF THE  
VISITING TEAM REVIEWING**

**Pleasant Grove High School  
700 East 200 South  
Pleasant Grove, Utah 84062**

**April 14-15, 2005**

**UTAH STATE OFFICE OF EDUCATION**

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## **FOREWORD**

The major purpose of the accreditation process is to stimulate school growth and improvement so as to increase student achievement.

In these efforts, the school staff makes a comprehensive evaluation of the school's programs, operations, and results. The school determines how actual practices align to stated objectives and resulting outcomes. It is a three-phased evaluation: (1) self-evaluation, (2) on-site evaluation by an external team of educators, and (3) implementation using units of the evaluation to improve the school by effecting thoughtful change.

The evaluation, April 14-15, 2005, was conducted because of the school's desire to ensure quality education for all students in the school, and to increase student achievement.

The entire staff of Pleasant Grove High School is commended for the time and effort devoted to studying and evaluating the various facets of the total program and to preparing the materials used by the Visiting Team. The excellent leadership given by Principal Jess Christen is also commended.

The staff and administration are congratulated for their desire for excellence at Pleasant Grove High School, and also for the professional attitude of all members of the group, which made it possible for them to see areas of weakness and strength and to suggest procedures for bringing about improvements.

While these recommendations may be used to solicit financial support to acquire some of the materials, equipment, and services needed to carry out a more effective program, it is even more important that the faculty and administration utilize them as they continue to evaluate and modify course offerings and administrative and classroom procedures to more dramatically increase student achievement at Pleasant Grove High School.

Patti Harrington, Ed.D.  
State Superintendent  
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**PLEASANT GROVE HIGH SCHOOL**  
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Chip Koop.....	Assistant Principal
Judy Runolfson .....	Assistant Principal
Dan Weishar.....	Assistant Principal

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Stephanie Cottam.....	Counselor

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Annaka Vimahi  
Lyndi Whitehead  
James Wilcock  
Jeff Wilson



## **PLEASANT GROVE HIGH SCHOOL**

### **MISSION STATEMENT**

Pleasant Grove High School is dedicated to assisting students as they navigate life through learning.

### **VISION STATEMENT**

The vision of Pleasant Grove High School is to empower our students to be lifelong thinkers and learners, whose actions are guided by service, accountability, respect, and democratic ideals.

### **BELIEF STATEMENTS**

1. At Pleasant Grove High School student learning is the chief priority.
2. At Pleasant Grove High School all students can learn.
3. At Pleasant Grove High School each student is a valued individual capable of contributing in a meaningful way and deserving of respect.
4. At Pleasant Grove High School a safe environment promotes student learning.
5. At Pleasant Grove High School teachers, administrators, parents, and the community share the responsibility for advancing the school's mission.
6. At Pleasant Grove High School we function as a professional learning community, which promotes improved teaching practices and student learning.
7. At Pleasant Grove High School students learn best when they are actively engaged in a learning process that incorporates a variety of learning activities to accommodate different learning styles.
8. At Pleasant Grove High School we believe that students can learn respect and responsibility for themselves and their community.
9. At Pleasant Grove High School we believe students can develop skills necessary for future success.

## **MEMBERS OF THE VISITING TEAM**

Deborah Swensen, Jordan High School, Jordan School District,  
Visiting Team Co-chairperson

Edy McGee, Indian Hills Middle School, Jordan School District,  
Visiting Team Co-chairperson

Kevin Barton, Elk Ridge Middle School, Jordan School District

Kathy Kerby, Wasatch Junior High School, Granite School District

Elaine Layosa, Orem High School, Alpine School District

Lillian Zarndt, Provo High School, Provo School District

# **VISITING TEAM REPORT**

## **PLEASANT GROVE HIGH SCHOOL**

### **CHAPTER 1: SCHOOL PROFILE**

Pleasant Grove High School is located in Pleasant Grove, Utah, a suburban/semi-rural area. The high school was established in 1905. Since that beginning, the school has changed and grown to its present enrollment of 1,605. This number is divided into the following classes: 590 sophomores, 547 juniors, and 469 seniors. While the school has only a limited number of minority students, comprising four percent of the student population, the school values the diversity that they provide, and the students feel welcomed and accepted. The ESL population is 20. The personnel of Pleasant Grove High include four administrators, four counselors, 77 teachers, and a support staff of 50.

Key statistics provide a picture of the student population at Pleasant Grove High School. Currently, Pleasant Grove High offers 405 courses, an increase of 73 courses over the previous year. Most recent graduation rates (2003-2004) indicate that 91 percent of Pleasant Grove High's students graduate. Also, one focus of Pleasant Grove is school attendance. The 2003-2004 attendance rate was 86 percent. This figure represents a nine percent drop from the previous year. Seventeen percent of the student population is on free or reduced-price lunch, a decrease from previous years. Pleasant Grove High offers a wide variety of extracurricular activities ranging from sports to a unicycle club. Additionally, senior English students participate in a senior service project as part of their character education focus.

Another feature of the school is its high rate of parental and community involvement. Parents are invited to be active participants at this school. With its proximity to two universities, Utah Valley State College and Brigham Young University, Pleasant Grove High School has established partnerships with the two institutes of higher learning. Students receive concurrent enrollment credit from UVSC and the school receives interns and student teachers from BYU. Additionally, BYU's Leadership Preparation Program uses the school as a site for placing its administrative interns.

In order to facilitate professional development, the school has modified its schedule. The school currently uses a monthly late-start schedule to implement collaboration. These efforts have produced a culture of support, respect, and collegiality.

a) *What significant findings were revealed by the school's analysis of its profile?*

The Pleasant Grove High School profile revealed that the population of the school is predominately homogeneous in ethnicity and socioeconomic status (SES). Approximately four percent of the student body is of ethnic origin. The ESL

program currently only serves twenty students. Additionally, the Visiting Team found that Pleasant Grove High's 17 percent of students on free and reduced-price lunch is actually a decrease from previous years.

Pleasant Grove High has made an effort to begin the process of collecting and analyzing student achievement data. All data is for the past four-year period. With one exception, data is not disaggregated; rather, it is for the entire school. These records of school performance test scores are shared with the faculty on a regular basis. The faculty has begun the process of using data to determine the school's educational direction. Currently, Pleasant Grove High uses the collaborative model to focus team meetings on student learning. During these collaborative sessions, teachers continue to use the data.

The data that Pleasant Grove High reported include GPA; composite SAT scores; SAT math, science, reading, social science, and language arts scores; UCA tests (later identified as CRT tests); AP tests taken and passed; concurrent enrollment; ACT scores; graduation rates; scholarship monies awarded; and the effects of the attendance policy on the GPA of students. The data on students' GPA was disaggregated by gender.

Results of reported data are as follows:

- In the area of GPA, the bulk of the students' grades fall in the "B" range. GPA data was disaggregated by gender, indicating that girls performed above boys in the 3.51-4.0 GPA range. The school's staff members determined that they needed to establish a uniform rubric for grading, although it is not clear what the basis for this decision was.
- As a total group, students have performed above state and Alpine District averages for the last four years on the SAT. The data does vary during some of the years, making either a noticeable jump (e.g., science) or a drop (e.g., language arts). The school recognizes that scores have changed during a year's testing period, but has not explored the reasons for the change in scores. In all test areas, it is not clear who is achieving at which levels due to lack of data disaggregation.
- The school has shown the pass rate for students on the CRT tests, and also identifies areas of concern in algebra, geometry, and biology. For the past two years scores have remained low. The manner in which the CRT data is presented in the written document is confusing. Additionally, it is not clear who are the non-learners. The Visiting Team, however, did find that the school has identified many of these students and has encouraged them to take advantage of the "Why Try" program and after-school math lab sessions.

- AP data shows a rise in scores and enrollment for 2003. The school makes the assumption that the drop in scores in 2004 was due to testing administration error. The Visiting Team did not find any support for this conclusion. The drop in AP enrollment is credited to more students taking concurrent enrollment classes. However, the data is not provided to support this conclusion.
- Four years ago, Pleasant Grove High implemented a new attendance policy. A comparison of the percentage of students attending with the percentage of tardies and with GPA is made for the four years the attendance policy has been in effect. Attendance remains fairly constant, while tardies have dropped. The current year shows a substantial drop in the overall school GPA, but there is no explanation for this phenomenon. In conversing with the school's administration, the Visiting Team determined that they were going to investigate the problem. The principal reported that he thinks that the reason is that students have found a way around the policy. As the attendance policy is an integral component of Pleasant Grove High, the Visiting Team recommends that the school continue to assess the effectiveness of this policy and modify it as necessary.

While the written report did not reveal a complete knowledge of the school, the Visiting Team found that the staff had a fairly extensive understanding of the progress that students were making in their specialized programs such as special education, the "Why Try" program used in the counseling center, and ESL. Additionally, targeted support is being provided through after-school study groups in math. Except for the data that the Counseling Department provided during the Team's visit, there is no evidence presented that any of these programs is creating a positive change in low-performance learners' scores.

The Visiting Team applauds the school for recognizing the need to continue the process of basing decisions on data. The Visiting Team also found during the visit that the school is beginning a plan through the counseling center to better identify its non-learners and implement an early intervention plan.

*b) What modifications to the school profile should the school consider for the future?*

The Visiting Team recommends that Pleasant Grove High School disaggregate both its testing data and empirical data by groups (e.g., SES, gender, ethnicity, etc.) in order to identify the school's learners and non-learners. The Visiting Team further suggests that Pleasant Grove High report the disaggregated data in an easily understood format that is accessible to all stakeholders. The Visiting Team also recommends that the school investigate and determine the contributing factors to the change in SAT scores so that the school can use appropriate strategies to avoid future drops in student learning.

The Visiting Team recommends that the school analyze additional data such as discipline records, ATE year-end test scores, results of intervention programs (e.g., “Why Try,” Math Labs), and anecdotal records of student learning and staff development. It is further recommended that Pleasant Grove High School look carefully at the data and only draw conclusions that are based on that data.

The Visiting Team is concerned that the DRSLs are not measurable, nor have they been fully implemented. It is clear that each department has individually begun to address the DRSLs, but the Visiting Team recommends that the school further develop an implementation plan for the desired results for student learning.

Finally, the Visiting Team found many commendable programs and activities being provided for increased student learning. These programs, however, were not included in the school profile. It is recommended that Pleasant Grove High further expand its profile to credit the additional work being done by the faculty, community, and administration.

#### **Suggested Areas for Further Inquiry:**

- Disaggregate of data to identify the learners and non-learners.
- Develop means to assess DRSLs and align the school’s action plan with them.
- Although the Visiting Team commends Pleasant Grove High for its move to a collaborative method, continued support and in-service needs to be provided to faculty members so that the momentum can be continued.
- In the department analyses, many department recommendations focus on teacher learning; the Visiting Team recommends that department recommendations be phrased so as to focus on student learning.
- Create a transition from student goals to teacher behavior to intended outcomes.

## **CHAPTER 2: THE SELF-STUDY PROCESS**

- a) *To what extent has the school community engaged in a collaborative self-study process on behalf of students?*

Pleasant Grove’s document indicated strong participation from the faculty in the self-study process. At first glance it appeared that the only stakeholders involved in the process were the faculty members. However, the Visiting Team found that

parents and students were invited and involved in part of the process. While these groups did not remain as actively involved, the invitation remained open. It is recommended that Pleasant Grove High continue to evaluate itself using focus group discussion and strive to raise its stakeholders' level of inclusion in the process.

The Visiting Team recognized that the administration and faculty are dedicated to the process of increasing student achievement. The Visiting Team applauds the Pleasant Grove High administrators for their insight and initiation concerning this accreditation process. The collaborative process has been effective, and the Visiting Team applauds the initiative of the administration in creating a time for teachers to continue further collaboration. It is recommended that collaboration be used to revisit the DRSLs to determine how they will be measured, increase the school's understanding of student achievement through disaggregated data, and develop the action plan to reflect the implementation of the DRSLs based on increased knowledge about the needs of students at Pleasant Grove High.

- b) *To what extent does the school's self-study accurately reflect the school's current strengths and limitations?*

The Visiting Team believes that focus groups, departments, and administrators have been honest in their process of self-evaluation. The Visiting Team recommends that the school community continue to examine and utilize collected data to recognize and address the school's strengths and limitations.

### **CHAPTER 3: INSTRUCTIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS**

Pleasant Grove High School's desired results for student learning (DRSLs) are as follows:

#### **1. Character development**

Democracy: Students will demonstrate the civic conscience by participating actively in the local and world community for the public and global good.

Serving with Compassion: Students will care about the needs of others and become activists for positive solutions including service projects that are part of classroom curriculum.

Responsibility: Students will demonstrate personal accountability by accepting responsibility for choices made individually and/or collectively.

Tolerance and Respect: Students will learn to tolerate and respect differences in cultures, ethnicity and beliefs.

**2. Thinking and reasoning skills**

Critical thinking: Students will learn to research, organize, and synthesize information effectively.

Problem Solving: Students solve problems by evaluating, determining a variety of solution, and implementing the optimal solution.

Creative thinking: Students will learn to appropriate fresh ideas through exposure to varied genres and mediums.

**3. Effective communicators**

Students will send, receive, and use information through a variety of mediums including writing, reading, speaking, presenting, listening, observing.

**4. Life-long learner**

Continuously seeks answers to questions of personal interest, either through informal or formal learning.

Understands personal learning style and establishes personal learning goals.

Recognizes the need for the ability to learn and adapt to an ever-changing world.

**5. Employability**

Computer Literacy: A computer-literate individual is one who has a basic understanding of common software applications and basic computer operation, and the confidence and ability to learn new applications and install and operate new software.

Interpersonal skills: This individual interacts positively with others, is able to resolve conflict in a constructive way, follows instruction, and can communicate, collaborate and work effectively in a team.

Dependability: A dependable person is punctual, reliable, and able to work independently without continual supervision.

**Shared Vision, Beliefs, Mission, and Goals:**

- a) *To what extent did the school facilitate a collaborative process to build a shared vision for the school (mission) that defines a compelling purpose and direction for the school?*

Pleasant Grove High has done an outstanding job establishing collaboration among teachers, administration, and parents to develop a shared vision for the school. This collaboration continued over an extended period of time. However, two components of the school stakeholders who were not included are classified personnel and students. The Visiting Team recommends that the input of these two groups be considered when defining a purpose and direction for the school. The Visiting Team commends Pleasant Grove High for developing a vision that is



focused on student learning. Further, the Visiting Team commends the school for establishing an academic learning climate in which teaching and learning are supported and where students and faculty feel valued and important and their achievements acknowledged.

- b) *To what extent has the school defined a set of beliefs that reflect the commitment of the administration and staff to support student achievement and success?*

Pleasant Grove High's belief statements are well thought out. They support the vision statement: "The vision of Pleasant Grove High School is to empower our students to be life-long thinkers and learners, whose actions are guided by service, accountability, respect and democratic ideals." Both teachers and students reported knowledge of the belief statements. However, the Visiting Team recommends that the school place more emphasis on the vision and belief statements by placing them in conspicuous locations throughout the school, including classrooms.

Although the Visiting Team found strong evidence that the administration and faculty feel a sense of ownership and a strong commitment to these beliefs, Pleasant Grove High's action plan is not aligned to the vision and belief statements. The Visiting Team recommends that the school revisit its action plan to align it with the belief and vision statements. The action plan should include a plan not only for documenting student growth on the selected target goals for school improvement, but also for assessing the extent of implementation and effectiveness.

- c) *To what extent do the school's mission and beliefs align to support the school's desired results for student learning (DRSLs)?*

Pleasant Grove High's DRSLs express the characteristics listed in the vision statement and belief statement in more specific detail and in greater depth. Each DRSL, except employability, can be correlated to a specific component of the vision and belief statements. One area of weakness discovered by the Visiting Team was that the DRSLs are not measurable, nor is there evidence that the DRSLs have been implemented in all classrooms. Therefore, the Visiting Team recommends that the school rewrite its DRSLs in terms that allow them to be measured, and that the school develop a plan for the DRSLs' full implementation in all classrooms.

### **Curriculum Development:**

- a) *To what extent does the staff work collaboratively to ensure the curriculum is based on clearly defined standards and the Utah Core Curriculum (with inclusion of the Utah Life Skills)?*

The curriculum is based on Utah State Core standards and school DRSLs, which reflect worthwhile expectations for student learning. Grade level and subject specific committees are used to establish what is to be taught, when it will be taught, and how it will be assessed. Assessments are analyzed through department teachers. The department committee then revises the curriculum to address identified weak areas of student achievement on NCLB goals. Further support for curriculum alignment was gleaned from survey results that indicate the curriculum met parent and student standards, addressing the diverse learning needs of students without compromising the essential knowledge and skills that all students are expected to achieve. The Visiting Team found during the visit and through survey results that students have opportunities to explore additional applications of their learning through internships, concurrent enrollment programs, and specialized course offerings.

The Visiting Team found that some assessment data are disaggregated to examine the effectiveness of the curriculum in addressing the learning needs of all students, while instructional support, resources, and assessments of student learning are implemented through staff development programs and collegial planning sessions. It is recommended that this practice continue and be expanded to include all assessment data.

There is an ongoing process in place for evaluating the curriculum that employs multiple means of evaluation, including ongoing action research. The curriculum is updated and modified as needed. Dated, irrelevant, ineffective, and non-research-based aspects of the curriculum are eliminated.

Pleasant Grove High has set aside time for departments to collaborate. However, Pleasant Grove recognizes that some of its teachers do not have the opportunity to collaborate with other teachers within the school, as they are the only instructors in that subject area. To meet the needs of these teachers, Pleasant Grove High has provided both special development for their unique teaching situations and opportunities for collaboration with other schools. The Visiting Team applauds the beginning efforts of the administration and faculty to coordinate and articulate the curriculum in order to create a shared vision for student learning, and recommends continuing efforts in this area.

- b) *To what extent does the teaching staff work collaboratively to support the development of a curriculum that focuses on the school's desired results for student learning?*

Although most teachers and all students are unable to specify the DRSLs, they respond knowledgeably and favorably about their support and acceptance of these goals when shown a copy. English, social studies, and special education classes lead the school in the area of integrated curricula. The collegial atmosphere among faculty members ensures collaboration, with abundant evidence of sharing among Pleasant Grove teachers and even with other schools in the Alpine District.

Data indicates high achievement relative to Alpine School District and the rest of the state, with need for improvement in math and science. The Visiting Team would highly recommend that the Math and Science Departments continue to research ways to improve the learning of students in these areas. The Visiting Team also recommends the continued development of an implementation plan of the DRSLs in each department.

**Quality Instructional Design:**

- a) *To what extent does the professional staff design and implement a variety of learning experiences that actively engage students?*

During the Visiting Team's visit, many of the teachers were using multiple teaching strategies to engage all students in the learning process. These activities included direct instruction, classroom discussion, cooperative learning groups, peer tutoring groups, kinesthetic activities, problem solving inquiry activities, laboratory activities, role-play activities, and activities employing the use of technology. The Visiting Team observed that the faculty was dedicated, hard working, and willing to help individual students as needed. The Visiting Team conducted interviews with students and parents who indicated they are satisfied with the quality of instruction at Pleasant Grove High.

The school has identified a need for an increased emphasis on the relationship between everyday life and what students are learning. The school's action plan identifies the need and possible means to address this concern through a unified approach to professional development instruction. Pleasant Grove High recognizes the need to assist teachers in developing skills to assist their students in synthesizing their learning with everyday life. To achieve this goal, they are planning a "learning and life relationship" class. The Visiting Team applauds Pleasant Grove High for identifying this need, and recommends that the school make it a part of the process in the action plan.

Pleasant Grove High offers both concurrent enrollment and Advanced Placement classes. Concurrent enrollment has been very successful, but Pleasant Grove High has identified that the enrollment in AP is declining. To facilitate greater student choice and to increase AP enrollment, Pleasant Grove High plans to establish new Advanced Placement classes and to expand and emphasize an ACT preparation course.

The Visiting Team recommends that all teachers continue to explore the use of research-based "best practices" that will actively engage as many students as possible in learning.

- b) *To what extent does the professional staff employ a variety of instructional strategies to ensure the needs of different learners are met?*

The Visiting Team observed many dedicated and effective teachers who used a variety of instructional strategies to engage the students in learning. The teaching staff was actively engaged in addressing the needs of students in Advanced Placement and honors programs, as well as resource/special education and basic classes. Since Pleasant Grove High has a four-period day with long class periods, the Visiting Team feels that it is important to use a variety of teaching strategies. Most teachers used multiple strategies within a single class period to engage all students in learning. It was obvious in many classrooms that teachers were consciously aware of the need to vary their activities and strategies to meet the needs of the individual students within the classroom.

Some teachers expressed concern over their class sizes and the increase in the number of students with special needs. However, members of the teaching staff expressed a willingness to monitor and adjust their instruction and to receive additional training in meeting the needs of diverse learners. Regarding data-driven instructional strategies, the Visiting Team observed a need for better disaggregated student data. This data could then be used to adjust or modify instruction to remediate or improve student learning.

- c) *To what extent do the professional staff and leadership provide additional opportunities which support student learning?*

Pleasant Grove High School provides its students with many additional opportunities that support student learning. The Visiting Team's interviews with parents and students indicated that many teachers are available before and after school to provide extra help with assignments or difficult concepts. They also make an effort to provide ample opportunities for students who seek help or assistance to succeed in their classes. Additional resources include after-school tutoring, after-school labs, peer tutors, parent volunteers working within classes, a sophomore mentor program, and paraprofessional aides.

The Visiting Team learned that Pleasant Grove High is currently developing a plan to coordinate all additional support systems for students. The Visiting Team applauds this effort and recommends that the school continue this plan through implementation and assessment.

### **Quality Assessment Systems:**

- a) *To what extent has the staff developed classroom or school-wide assessments based on clearly articulated expectations for student achievement?*

The Visiting Team recognizes the effort that has been made in past years to improve teacher collaboration in the making of assessments for students. The efforts have been far reaching, as there are a variety of assessment tools that are

used in the classroom. The Visiting Team monitored and found that most teachers have collaborated and formed assessments that adequately cover the intended range of essential knowledge and skills to be assessed.

The Visiting Team found that Pleasant Grove High School has started the process of developing better assessments. The Visiting Team also found that only a small portion of data had been collected to authenticate the assessments of student learning. This limited the samples given to evaluate student learning at this school. Because of this, the Visiting Team feels that if the school continues to evaluate and collect data on their assessments, it will be able to better formulate effective assessments. As correct data is used to support the changes in assessments, the school will truly affect student learning.

The Visiting Team has found that students have been provided with additional opportunities to demonstrate their learning beyond the initial assessment, but no directions have been made to measure this process. Pleasant Grove High School can benefit from collecting and disaggregating its student assessment data in a way that is simple to read and understand for each stakeholder.

- b) *To what extent are assessments of student learning developed using methods that reflect the intended purpose and performance standards?*

Pleasant Grove High School has identified the information needed to formulate good assessments of student learning. The school's assessments meet the suggested state and district Core Curricula; therefore, in most cases the purpose of the assessment is clearly defined and effectively communicated to the stakeholders. Still, the Visiting Team found that it was not fully disclosed in the self-study or the visit. Efforts need to be made to effectively communicate the purpose of the assessment to all stakeholders. The Visiting Team also found that in most cases the assessment results were consistent with the purpose of the assessment, but vague in the presentation of data. As continued efforts are made to communicate the purpose of assessment to the stakeholders, more effective assessment will be found at Pleasant Grove High School. To help in this effort, the Visiting Team feels that better collection of empirical and qualitative data is needed.

- c) *To what extent are assessments designed, developed, and used in a fair and equitable manner?*

The Visiting Team found that efforts are being made to strengthen this area of assessment. Due to the nature of high schools, the Visiting Team realizes that this is an ongoing process. With the different programs from state and local areas, we realize that assessments can become very inequitable. The Visiting Team commends the efforts that have been made in the area of assessments and encourages Pleasant Grove High School to continue its department collaboration efforts to increase the equity of assessments in the classroom.

### **Leadership for School Improvement:**

- a) *To what extent does the school leadership promote quality instruction by fostering an academic learning climate and actively supporting teaching and learning?*

Pleasant Grove promotes quality instruction to an excellent and high degree. Students feel like the school is a place for them to compete to succeed; they feel that the administration encourages taking responsibility and wants them to succeed in a highly positive, motivating manner; they feel that the teachers are extremely caring and also want them to succeed.

Teachers feel free to innovate, teach passionately, and do their best; they enjoy interdepartmental collaboration and the administration's support in their endeavors to evolve as educators. Teachers, parents, and students believe the school is committed to continuous learning through professional development opportunities, collegiality, staff collaboration on curriculum and assessment improvement, and a new, stringent attendance/tardy policy that has improved school safety.

Faculty members and students feel valued, encouraged, even celebrated in their pursuits and in their attempts to achieve excellence. The school has established a strong and positive academic learning climate in which teaching and learning are actively supported. There is a culture of high expectations for student and staff, as shown by awards parties that are supported by community donations and include with "on a roll" rewards for "most improved" students, perfect attendance, and honor/high honor roll. Each year, a car valued at \$8,000 is won by a student through a raffle, with the number of "raffle tickets" based on individual student achievements. Other rewards for high achievement include gas cards, cash, skateboards and T-shirts. During a "Staff Appreciation Week," community and business donations pay for at least one prize per staff member, awarded at a luncheon in the media center. Teachers are honored by one another at each faculty meeting with "By George" recognitions. This administration, faculty, and staff reflect high mutual support and esteem, which is evident from the attitudes of students and parents.

The school's department chairs are highly aware of and committed to instructional innovation and professionalism.

- b) *To what extent does the school leadership employ effective decision making that is data-driven, research-based, and collaborative?*

The leadership of Pleasant Grove High is committed to employing effective decision making based on data, research, and collaboration. Although there is no evidence that faculty members are included in all decisions, interviews with teachers provided data indicating that their voices are heard. Examples of this inclusion are the introductory surveys that the principal used to determine the

“non-discussable” problems in the school. He is using the results of this survey to address these issues and modify practices as necessary.

To help the faculty become more data-driven, the leadership team sent ten teachers to a Rick DuFour workshop. In March, the leadership brought DuFour to Pleasant Grove High. Furthermore, the school has moved to a late start schedule to accommodate these collaboration efforts. The Visiting Team recommends that Pleasant Grove High continue using data, research, and collaboration.

- c) *To what extent does the school leadership monitor progress in student achievement and instructional effectiveness through a comprehensive assessment system and continuous reflection?*

Continuous reflection is a great strength at this school, particularly in its administration, counseling staff, department chairs, and in many of its teachers and students. The administration engages in continual collection of data to monitor student progress. These findings are passed on to faculty and staff members in faculty meetings. A comprehensive assessment system is in the process of being created and implemented at the school; in many areas successful assessment is in place, in individual classrooms and coordinated throughout some, but not all, departments.

A data committee has been established to evaluate progress. The Counseling Department meets regularly to evaluate student graduation progress and check seniors' grades, attendance, and tardiness every two weeks, then communicates problems to parents through letters. The school regularly assesses the effectiveness of instructional practices and organizational conditions. The Visiting Team commends Pleasant Grove High for its goal of identifying at-risk students earlier and establishing a more uniform system of rubrics to be implemented departmentally. Additionally, departments are in the process of developing common course assessments.

- d) *To what extent does the school leadership provide skillful stewardship by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources of the school for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment?*

Decisions related to the allocation and use of resources are systematically aligned with the school's goals. Existing resources are recast in the service of advancing the school's mission, goals, and school improvement initiatives. Hallways and classrooms display a wide array of posters with character-building quotes, while faculty and staff reflect good models of civic virtue.

The safe learning environment is ensured by a thoughtful, disciplined attendance policy and follow-up, as well as the cooperative, friendly atmosphere and positive recognition given to students. School policies are clearly outlined in the student handbook, but since only fifty percent of the students claim to know the rules, the

Visiting Team recommends that school leadership make a concerted effort to inform all students of school policies. Along with knowing school rules, the Visiting Team recommends that a plan be developed and implemented for student accountability for cleanliness in the lunch area.

The school's effective learning environment is ensured by the careful planning and preparation of the administration and faculty. The efficient learning environment is ensured by careful training, creative use of resources, and thoughtful planning in spending. The Visiting Team also supports Pleasant Grove High's recommendation to show that the allocation of funds is designed to match the mission of the school and to improve means of gathering and effectively interpreting data.

The Team commends the administration and School Community Council for addressing concerns about uncleanness due to bats that infrequently occupy teaching areas and reside in the attic space, leaving fecal and urine deposits. This odor travels down "Bat Hall" and irritates teachers and students. The Visiting Team recommends that the school continue to petition Alpine District personnel to alleviate this health problem. The Visiting Team also commends the School Community Council for investigating the safety concerns of the school and contacting the district to ask for a satisfactory resolution of these issues.

Also recommended is a plan to involve the community in maintaining the technology of the school, especially connecting the special education computers to the Internet.

The Visiting Team recommends that Pleasant Grove High address, as part of its at-risk population, the approximately 100 students who transfer out between 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade.

The Visiting Team applauds the current successful interventions in place:

- Study Skills Career Center Lab for "Make-up, Catch-up, Keep-up"
- Half-hours before and after school with teachers
- UVSC
- Remediation for students failing portions of the UBSCT
- Quarterly mailing to parents of seniors' graduation and credit status.

In order to retain a higher percentage of at-risk students, the Visiting Team recommends the following interventions be explored:

- Compile statistics for transfer-out students and their breakdown into populations of full attendees (grades 10-12), new move-ins who become permanent residents, and transient in and outs and ins, due to military, rehabilitation, home schooling, and other extraordinary family situations.
- Systematize first interventions for low grades after the first three weeks of each term.



- Create an in-school “make-up, catch-up, keep-up” where other students act as tutors, with a teacher’s aide or non-certified staff members as supervisor. Explore other possible settings for students with behavioral problems (e.g., vocational classes, small tutoring classes, part-time or full-time assisted studies, etc.).

e) *To what extent does the school leadership make decisions related to the allocation and use of resources which align with the school goals, the achievement of the DRSLs, and school improvement efforts?*

With sincere thoughtfulness and responsible parsimony, the school leadership correlates its resources with the school goals, desired results for student learning, and school improvement efforts.

The school leadership, including counseling staff, is particularly aware of and willing to serve all students, including the at-risk population; the school’s efforts aim to fulfill not only the letter of the law, but its spirit as well. In this context, the term “law” translates into the very core of all educational endeavors: student success.

The Visiting Team would, however, caution the leadership to use intern placements judiciously, even though they are financially attractive and logistically convenient. If interns are used, it is recommended that a strong mentoring program be in place, as in the English Department.

Pleasant Grove High is committed to its plan to expand offerings of higher-end classes and classes for students who are still struggling in key subject areas. The Visiting Team found that a plan was presented and approved by the Community Council to offer additional AP classes in art history and statistics for the accelerated students, and to “stretch” algebra, along with two reading classes, to accommodate remediation for students to pass the UBSCT test. Both parts of the plan assist in accommodating the needs of students.

f) *To what extent does the school leadership empower the school community and encourage commitment, participation, collaboration, and shared responsibility for student learning?*

The school leadership empowers the school community with shared responsibility for student learning. Members of the PTSA and School Community Council are invited to all school meetings, including faculty meetings and attendance appeals. Furthermore, they participate in the interview process. As Pleasant Grove High began its collaboration process, the administration directed much of the initial work. Now that the faculty has begun to understand the process, the administration has empowered the faculty by turning over to the departments the responsibility for this collaboration. The administration continues to monitor and provide necessary feedback as the school continues this effort.

### **Community Building:**

- a) *To what extent does the school foster community building and working relationships within the school?*

The Visiting Team truly found that the students and teachers of the school felt that a positive and productive working relationship has been established. Many students and teachers expressed the enjoyment they have in working together to build an effective learning community at Pleasant Grove High School. The teachers and students have expressed that a sense of collaboration is starting to be developed in the school and is helping to foster better student conduct in the school and the community where they live. The Visiting Team commends the school for its desire to improve and move forward in the improvement process.

The Visiting Team has noticed a start toward developing a good community effort, but Pleasant Grove High School must sustain a learning environment for students that nurtures a sense of caring and belonging. The Visiting Team also noticed that collaboration and interdependent teams are established. The Visiting Team encourages the school to increase its efforts in this area. Pleasant Grove High School will improve its communal identity as it involves more community members in its goal making and collaboration.

- b) *To what extent does the school extend the school community through collaborative networks that support student learning?*

Pleasant Grove High School should be commended for its past efforts in building a school community. Past and current programs that are in effect have extended the school into the community. Internships, concurrent enrolment, PTA, and all other forms of communal support have been viewed as strengths for the school and will result in continued success. The Visiting Team has seen that the school has reached out to the majority of parents and families to try and help them be actively engaged in community building at the school. Still, the school has not fully developed or supported collaboration networks with the community.

The Visiting Team feels that Pleasant Grove High School has started the process of bringing the community into the school and encourages the school to increase this effort. To build a proper school community, all educational stakeholders should be involved. Pleasant Grove High School is on the right track, and the Team encourages extension of the school to the community by bringing more stakeholders into the process. Businesses, interest groups, and parents can ensure that the school builds collaborative, long-lasting networks in the community. As meaningful partnerships are established, learning opportunities for students increase.

### **Culture of Continuous Improvement and Learning:**

- a) *To what extent does the school build skills and the capacity for improvement through comprehensive and ongoing professional development programs focused on the school's goals for improvement?*

Pleasant Grove High School's organizational system and culture are supportive of professional development and provide many opportunities to be engaged in professional growth. A majority of the teachers have shown a commitment to earning advanced degrees and endorsements, and most of the faculty members have been trained in using reading and writing strategies in their classrooms. Also, they have been involved in Understanding by Design, Moral Dimensions, Professional Learning Communities (as a pilot program with BYU), and technology development.

The Visiting Team applauds the school for engaging teachers through training at conferences, and the sharing of conference information with both classified and certified staff. The Visiting Team also applauds the school for bringing in professional development to address identified concerns.

The Visiting Team suggests that staff development efforts become more focused on the DRSLs. It is recommended that data-driven, research-based information be used to determine the direction of the school improvement process, with the addition of disaggregated data.

- b) *To what extent does the school create conditions that support productive change and continuous improvement?*

The Pleasant Grove High administrators, teachers, and staff have a strong desire to help students. The faculty has participated in many professional development activities and acted as members of the various focus groups set up to examine the issue of school improvement. The school counselors are working to identify failing students sooner so that they can collaborate with the teachers in setting up intervention plans for individual students. Also, the counselors and teachers are working together to unify their intervention plans for students. The administration is working to develop a culture of collaboration and continuous improvement by supporting a monthly "late start" day on which the students come to school at 10:00 a.m., which allows for collaboration, planning time, and organization of the focus groups.

## **CHAPTER 4: NORTHWEST ASSOCIATION OF ACCREDITED SCHOOLS (NAAS) STANDARDS I-XI**

### **Standard I – Educational Program**

This standard is met. Pleasant Grove’s instructional and organizational practices, as well as its policies and procedures, support the desired results for student learning and prepare students to succeed in a culturally diverse, democratic society.

### **Standard II – Student Personnel Services**

This standard is met. Student personnel services are designed to give systematic assistance to students. The assigned personnel for guidance includes a minimum of one full-time person for each 400 students enrolled.

### **Standard III – School Plant and Equipment**

This standard is met. The school plant provides for a variety of instructional activities and programs and incorporates aesthetic features that contribute to a positive educational atmosphere.

### **Standard IV – Library Media Program**

This standard is met. The school library media program is a primary resource for literacy, information, and curriculum support. A certified library media teacher provides instruction, resources, and activities to promote independent use of ideas and information.

### **Standard V – Records**

This standard is met. Student records are maintained, handled, and protected in the best interests of students and parents. Students and parents have the right to access personal student records and are ensured the privacy of such, as guaranteed by federal legislation.

### **Standard VI – School Improvement (This is addressed in the self-study.)**

This standard is met. The school improvement plan focuses on the total school rather than each of the separate components within the school.

### **Standard VII – Preparation of Personnel**

This standard is met. All professional personnel are in compliance with the licensing requirements of the state of Utah and are properly endorsed for the subjects they are assigned.

### **Standard VIII – Administration**

This standard is met. The administration of Pleasant Grove provides educational leadership, supervises and coordinates programs, and carries out the necessary administrative procedures.

### **Standard IX – Teacher Load**

This standard is met, with comment: The total number of students instructed by any one teacher in any one grading period does exceed numbers set by the Utah State Office of Education and/or Northwest for six teachers. This number is down from thirteen teachers the previous year (2003-2004).

### **Standard X – Activities**

This standard is met. Pleasant Grove High supports a range of activities that supplement the basic instructional program by providing additional interests and experiences for learning to take place.

### **Standard XI – Business Practices**

This standard is met. The school is financially responsible. Proper budgetary procedures and generally accepted accounting principles are followed for all school funds. The school's advertising and promotional literature are completely truthful and ethical.

## **CHAPTER 5: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS – ACTION PLAN**

- a) *To what extent is the school-wide action plan adequate in addressing the critical areas for follow-up?*

The school-wide action plan addresses the need for improvement in four major areas: vision statement, parental involvement, professional learning community, and curriculum development. Unfortunately, the Visiting Team did not see any alignment of the action plan with the vision statement, the belief statements, or the DRSLs. Furthermore, except for a brief mention in the curriculum development action plan, none of the plans focused on student learning. The

Visiting Team recommends that student learning be the focus of the action plan. Another area of concern for the Visiting Team was that only a minimal amount of information was picked up from the recommendations made in the departmental and organizational analyses to be included in the school's action plan. The Visiting Team recommends that the school's stakeholders look at the department and organizational recommendations as they revisit their action plan.

- b) *To what extent is there sufficient commitment to the action plan, school-wide and system-wide?*

While Pleasant Grove High is committed to student learning and collaboration, these commendable goals are not reflected in the action plans. The Visiting Team recommends that Pleasant Grove High rewrite the action plan. All stakeholders should be involved in rewriting this plan, and the completed plan should be communicated to parents and students as well as school personnel.

- c) *How sound does the follow-up process that the school intends to use for monitoring the accomplishments of the school-wide action plan appear to be?*

The follow-up process will need to be developed after the school creates an appropriate action plan.

## **CHAPTER 6: MAJOR COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE VISITING TEAM**

### **Commendations:**

- The Visiting Team commends the atmosphere of collegiality that has been established at Pleasant Grove High School.
- Pleasant Grove High has established an academic learning climate in which teaching and learning are supported, where students and faculty members feel valued and important, and where their achievements are acknowledged.
- The Visiting Team applauds Pleasant Grove High for its highly intelligent, systematic planning to address the systemic issues of the at-risk population.
- The Visiting Team commends Pleasant Grove High for establishing a culture of collaboration. The culture of Pleasant Grove High supports the autonomy, creativity, and ownership of the faculty.
- The Visiting Team commends the effort of Pleasant Grove High in establishing effective partnerships within the community.

**Recommendations:**

- The Visiting Team recommends that the school revisit its action plan to align it with the belief and vision statements, document student growth, and develop a means to assess the extent of implementation and effectiveness.
- The Visiting Team recommends that the school revisit their DRSLs in terms that allow them to be measured and that they develop a plan for their full implementation in all classrooms.
- The Visiting Team recommends continued professional development so that the collaborative process can be successfully and fully implemented in order to allow the current momentum to continue.
- The Visiting Team commends Pleasant Grove High for establishing communication among administrators, parents, faculty members, and students. However, among stakeholders, concerns still exist (e.g., attendance policy, collaborative process, dress code enforcement, scheduling); therefore, the Visiting Team recommends that the leadership continue to make a concerted effort to address these concerns.
- The Visiting Team recommends that volunteers from the community and faculty receive training so that the faculty can use the volunteers more effectively.